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A quarterly newsletter of INVEST EAP

M E S S E N G E R A INVEST EAP P

Supporting a Healthy Organization

Change your Thoughts, Change your Mood

It happens to everyone. We get down on ourselves and tend to focus on the bad things more than the good. Not all negative thoughts are bad. Some negative thoughts are appropriate to the situation and can lead to a positive outcome. However, when we consistently interpret our life events as negative, this can lead to negative mental health outcomes such as depression and addictive behaviors. When we have outsized negative thoughts that are not in line with reality, everything seems worse than it is. These “distorted” thoughts can interfere with our self-esteem, mood, and behavior. The good news is that it is possible to use objective thinking to counteract these negative distortions.

WHAT YOU THINK BECOMES WHAT YOU BELIEVE

WHAT YOU BELIEVE BECOMES WHAT YOU FEEL

WHAT YOU FEEL BECOMES HOW YOU BEHAVE

TEN DISTORTIONS

When our thinking becomes distorted, we experience disproportionate emotions and have outsized behavioral reactions to an event. Here are ten common thought distortions that may seem familiar to you:

- All or nothing thinking – for example, breaking your diet a little bit is seen as a total failure
- Overgeneralization – for example, making rules based on single events
- Mental filters – for example, focusing on one thing to the exclusion of everything else
- Discounting the positive – for example, ignoring or discounting anything good
- Jumping to conclusions – for example, “mind reading” or “fortune telling”
- Magnification – for example, exaggerating problems or shortcomings
- Emotional reasoning- for example, judging yourself based on feeling negative emotions

- “Should” statements – for example, emphasizing unattainable standards
- Labeling – for example, judging based on a single behavior rather than yourself as a whole person
- Personalization and blame – for example, blaming yourself entirely when there are many causes

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY THOUGHTS ARE DISTORTED?

Here are some questions to help you see if you might be using one of these negative distortions.

- Is there evidence to support this negative thought?
- Is this thought making me feel better or worse? If it makes you feel worse, this may be a distortion.
- Is this thought helping me reach my goals or getting in my way? If it is getting in my way, then this may be a distortion.
- Would somebody else see this in a different way? If I was advising a friend in the same scenario, would I give different advice? If so, this might be a distortion.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF – FOCUS ON THE GOOD

Shift your focus to what is going well for you and celebrate your strengths. Look for the good things in your life and in your work and give yourself regular pats on the back for them. When you notice behaviors you want to improve, focus on positive ways of dealing with these situations and note when you’re judging yourself too harshly. If you need help negotiating those negative thoughts, contact us at Invest EAP. Here’s to a happier you!

FURTHER READING:

Feeling Good by Dr. David Burns. This classic book deals with behavioral ways to avoid depression and, as the title says, feel good.

Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy by Gerald Corey.

EAP SERVICES

EAP is here to help. For more information about articles in this newsletter, or any other EAP-related topic, please call one of our trained counselors at our toll-free number:

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